



SQA Corporate Plan 2011–14

Executive summary

Introduction

The Corporate Plan 2011–14 sets out SQA’s strategic direction for the next three years and covers both SQA’s accreditation and awarding functions. It builds on the organisation’s progress in recent years in aligning Strategic Goals to the Scottish Government’s National Performance Framework, and embedding the management of opportunities and risks within the corporate planning process.

The strategic drivers which have informed development of the 2011–14 Corporate Plan include:

- ◆ SQA’s vision, mission and values.
- ◆ Ministerial guidance on SQA’s contribution to development and implementation of Scottish Government policy.
- ◆ Changes to the Scottish and UK economic landscape requiring ever greater public sector efficiency and focused partnerships.

Context

A major focus for SQA during 2011–14 will be working with partners and other stakeholders to develop and deliver major change to the qualifications and assessment system in support of the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) programme. SQA will also have a key role in helping to move Scotland towards sustained economic recovery by ensuring that employers and individuals can access the skills and learning to support them through recession and into growth. SQA will continue to work towards delivery of its commitments within *Skills for Scotland: A Lifelong Skills Strategy* and the refreshed strategy *Skills for Scotland: Accelerating the Recovery and Increasing Sustainable Economic Growth*.

SQA recognises, and has planned for, future challenges from reduced public sector funding, from demographic movement, and from changes to qualification entry income as a result of increasing flexibility of qualification choice through CfE. The twin imperatives of pursuing income and market growth to reduce SQA’s reliance on public funds while reducing expenditure will increasingly stretch the organisation. To maintain its commitment to providing a high quality qualifications service for Scotland in this context, SQA is enhancing its capacity to respond to the needs of learners, employers, business, industry, the economy, and society.

Implementation of new processes and future investment in information technology will support increasing demand for online, on-demand and at-a-distance delivery of learning and assessment, create efficiency savings and enhance SQA’s ability to respond to the difficult financial environment. Generation of sustainable surpluses from commercial and international activities will be essential to sustain current qualifications and services and will also enable further investment in the qualifications and services that SQA provides for Scotland. SQA is working to promote Scotland’s ability to take advantage of emerging opportunities in a future low-carbon economy. In these ways and many others, SQA is working to ensure that it is well placed to respond to future opportunities and challenges.

Corporate Plan

In response to the drivers outlined above, SQA has identified eight Strategic Goals for 2011–14:

- 1 Develop, deliver and maintain a portfolio of qualifications and services to support the needs and aspirations of Scotland, its people and its economy.
- 2 Be regarded as a leader in assessment and quality enhancement of learning, in Scotland, and recognised worldwide.
- 3 Enhance the role of qualifications and services in recognising the skills of individuals across the education and training system.
- 4 Ensure SQA activities support the Scottish Government's agenda to maximise the benefits to Scotland of international engagement.
- 5 Subject to demand and statutory requirement, accredit and assure the quality of qualifications, delivered in Scotland — other than those conferred by higher education institutions.
- 6 Ensure high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive service delivery.
- 7 Continue to develop SQA as a leading public body.
- 8 Continue to develop a business model that maximises funding and efficiency to allow SQA to meet its statutory obligations in the changing economic and public sector environment.

These eight Strategic Goals carry forward themes identified in SQA's Corporate Plan 2010–13, aligned to the Scottish Government's National Outcomes. The mapping of SQA's Strategic Goals to the Scottish Government's National Outcomes is illustrated later in the Plan. Corporate actions have been developed to demonstrate how SQA will work towards achievement of these Strategic Goals in 2011–14.

Budget

SQA's budget is set out in Section 3. It outlines the range of sources from which SQA generates funds and illustrates how these funds are to be used to achieve the organisation's Strategic Goals.

HR strategy

SQA's human resources strategy and staffing plan for 2011–14 has been prepared to support achievement of the organisation's Strategic Goals. This is vital to ensure that the objectives and skills of SQA's staff and appointees are aligned to the organisation's priorities and that morale and motivation are maintained at a high level during these challenging times.

Performance measures

SQA will continue to monitor and report on progress towards its Strategic Goals for 2011–14 through quarterly performance reviews and the *Annual Report and Accounts*.

Section 1: Strategic drivers

Vision, mission and values

The Corporate Plan 2011–14 is underpinned by SQA’s vision, mission and values.

SQA’s vision is to be ‘recognised nationally and internationally as a leader in qualifications and assessment’, and its mission is ‘to work in partnership to provide high quality, recognised and relevant qualifications and assessment’.

Five values define the way SQA staff will work with each other, customers, partners, stakeholders and the wider public, in delivering services for Scotland’s learners. These are:

- ◆ Quality
- ◆ Integrity
- ◆ Innovation
- ◆ Partnership
- ◆ Service

Scottish Government policy

The Scottish Government published its Economic Strategy in November 2007, updating this more recently as part of its Economic Recovery Plan. The strategy builds on its Programme for Scotland to provide more information to explain how public services will contribute to the delivery of the five Strategic Objectives:

- ◆ Wealthier and Fairer Scotland
- ◆ Smarter Scotland
- ◆ Healthier Scotland
- ◆ Safer and Stronger Scotland
- ◆ Greener Scotland

SQA’s unique position means that it has an opportunity and responsibility to contribute to all of these objectives, principally supporting economic and individual development through lifelong learning.

As a non-departmental public body, Ministers provide guidance to SQA on the policies and priorities the organisation is expected to pursue, and this guidance drives the development of the Corporate Plan. Recent guidance encourages the organisation to contribute to the development and implementation of economic and skills policies, particularly aligning SQA activities to other bodies (such as Skills Development Scotland, Scottish Funding Council and sector skills councils) and developing collaborative working. The organisation is also expected to continue to increase the level of access to its qualifications by learners with different needs, situations and goals.

Skills and employability

Many of the developments in the world of education, training, and lifelong learning in 2010–11 were shaped by the economic recession and its impact on Scotland’s employers and individuals. Responding to the effects of economic downturn and preparing for recovery has been a theme in the work of the Scottish Government, the UK Government, SQA, and many

partner agencies and organisations. SQA continues to ensure that it is in a strong position to work with its customers, stakeholders, and partners to develop and lead initiatives that will help people across Scotland to re-skill and up-skill with qualifications that meet their needs and the needs of Scotland.

The economic climate has meant a renewed — or re-invigorated — focus on the skills agenda. This has included the Scottish Government publishing its Economic Recovery Plan; *Skills for Scotland: Accelerating the Recovery and Increasing Sustainable Economic Growth*; ScotAction; Partnership Action for Continuing Employment; as well as launching a National Conversation on Employability and Skills, and announcing a review of higher education and wider post-16 reform. The UK Government meanwhile has been working on various initiatives such as: New Industry, New Jobs; Jobs of the Future; and Skills for Growth, the national skills strategy. All these strategies and initiatives are intended to help move Scotland and the UK towards recovery by ensuring that employers and individuals can access the skills and learning to support them through recession and into growth. SQA has a central role to play here along with the Government and other agencies.

Curriculum for Excellence

As well as its work with partners on the skills agenda and employability, SQA is also continuing to work on the development of Curriculum for Excellence. This will be the most important qualifications development programme in a generation. CfE is about helping all young people in Scotland to take their place in a modern society and economy. It provides a framework that will enable children and young people to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens, and effective contributors. SQA is one of the partners in CfE, working closely with the Scottish Government, Education Scotland, the Association of Directors of Education Scotland (ADES), and with schools and colleges. SQA's principal role is to lead work on the development of new and revised qualifications, their assessment and quality assurance. SQA will also work with partners on assessment more generally.

New National Qualifications will play a key role in helping to deliver the values, purposes, and principles of the reforms within the senior phase. They will help raise standards of achievement, improve learning experiences, and develop skills for learning, life and work during the senior phase. The assessment will promote breadth, depth and application of knowledge, understanding and skills. It will motivate and challenge learners, and ensure that they can move smoothly from a broad, general education into learning that leads to qualifications, further and higher education, and employment.

SQA is continuing to work on these qualifications, while ensuring that its partners and the teaching profession are fully involved in the Qualifications Design Teams, Working Groups, and Curriculum Area Review Groups that will help develop the new qualifications and assessment, and review the existing qualifications.

Public sector efficiency and partnership

SQA is committed to delivering efficiencies and best use of public resources across all aspects of its business. The Corporate Plan 2011–14 includes actions aimed at generating surpluses from some aspects of SQA's activity — for example, work in international and rest-of-the-UK markets — and using those to reinvest in the products and services provided for Scotland. SQA also aims to make best use of public resources by operating a demand-driven product development process, to ensure that all its qualifications and services are relevant. The

organisation will continue to focus on reviewing its processes to identify opportunities to improve quality and efficiency.

SQA has a strategic approach to partnership working across the education and training sectors, and recognises that the National Performance Framework, Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 and *Skills for Scotland: Accelerating the Recovery and Increasing Sustainable Economic Growth* demand even closer collaboration with colleagues across public services to take forward the five Strategic Objectives for Scotland.

SQA's key partners include:

- ◆ Alliance of Sector Skills Councils
- ◆ Employers, business groups and professional bodies
- ◆ Education Scotland
- ◆ Local authorities
- ◆ Scotland's Colleges
- ◆ Scottish Funding Council
- ◆ Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework
- ◆ Scottish Government
- ◆ Skills Development Scotland
- ◆ Universities Scotland

Section 2: SQA Strategic goals and corporate actions 2011–14

I SQA Awarding Body

Corporate actions for Strategic Goal 1

Develop, deliver and maintain a portfolio of qualifications and services to support the needs and aspirations of Scotland, its people and its economy.

- A1.1 Maintain effective portfolio management that ensures SQA continues to meet stakeholder needs.
- A1.2 Develop and deliver new qualifications and assessment to support Curriculum for Excellence.
- A1.3 Develop, maintain and deliver relevant products and services.
- A1.4 Deliver flexible, timely and accurate results and certification for all qualifications.
- A1.5 Increase awareness and understanding of the breadth of SQA's portfolio and expertise within Scotland, the UK and worldwide.
- A1.6 Promote and support the benefits of a unified Scottish qualifications system including progression pathways underpinned by the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF).
- A1.7 Respond to emerging policy developments to ensure SQA's portfolio meets the needs of all stakeholders.
- A1.8 Maintain national standards of qualifications and assessment.

Corporate actions for Strategic Goal 2

Be regarded as a leader in assessment and quality enhancement of learning, in Scotland, and recognised worldwide.

- A2.1 Work with key partners to embed best practice in assessment and quality assurance across education and training.
- A2.2 Continue to develop the capability and capacity of SQA staff, appointees and centres through continuing professional development plans — working with partners as appropriate.
- A2.3 Develop innovative and flexible approaches to assessments and quality assurance that support learning, taking full account of equality legislation.
- A2.4 Expand the availability and use of e-assessment.

- A2.5 Work with partners to establish and develop the National Assessment Resource.
- A2.6 Provide the Scottish Government, key stakeholders and partners with independent advice on learning, assessment and quality assurance. This will be based on research evidence drawing on UK and international experience and best practice.
- A2.7 Provide advice and guidance to international governments and agencies on learning, assessment and quality assurance based on research evidence and best practice.

Corporate actions for Strategic Goal 3

Enhance the role of qualifications and services in recognising the skills of individuals across the education and training system.

- A3.1 Continue to identify innovative, flexible, robust models for recognising skills within qualifications.
- A3.2 Working with partners, develop and implement a plan to extend recognition of skills.

Corporate actions for Strategic Goal 4

Ensure SQA activities support the Scottish Government's agenda to maximise the benefits to Scotland of international engagement.

- A4.1 Continue to contribute towards the Scottish Government's international policy, development and engagement.
- A4.2 Develop SQA's international strategy and associated engagement activities.
- A4.3 Further refine processes for opportunity assessment, including risk management and contingency planning.
- A4.4 Provide continued support for the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) and its relationship with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) — and other frameworks to increase recognition, understanding and credit transfer for Scottish qualifications.
- A4.5 Continue to promote SQA, the Scottish education and skills system, and Scotland itself, in international markets.
- A4.6 Develop a trading subsidiary to support SQA's international activities.

II SQA Accreditation

Corporate actions for Strategic Goal 5

Subject to demand and statutory requirement, accredit and assure the quality of qualifications, delivered in Scotland — other than those conferred by higher education institutions.

- A5.1 Continue to accredit qualifications which, within Scotland, encourage economic growth, provide personal benefits, are designed to meet existing and future skills needs, and assist in addressing skills gaps, thereby supporting the needs of Scotland and its people.
- A5.2 Target SQA Accreditation's resources and approach to maximise the added value of the accreditation services provided.
- A5.3 Promote and support the use of progression pathways in accredited qualifications to support the population of the SCQF.
- A5.4 Maximise SQA Accreditation's engagement with key stakeholders to continue to raise its profile as a leading regulator of qualifications.

III SQA Corporate

Corporate actions for Strategic Goal 6

Ensure high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive service delivery.

- A6.1 Continue to develop a culture that delivers continuous improvement throughout the organisation.
- A6.2 Ensure staff and appointees have the necessary skills and competences to deliver SQA's Strategic Goals.
- A6.3 Continue the implementation of the information systems strategy.
- A6.4 Work with partners to ensure that there are co-ordinated quality management systems across the education and skills sector.
- A6.5 Ensure optimum utilisation of staff through a capacity planning model and flexible deployment of resources.
- A6.6 Ensure appropriate business continuity arrangements are in place to minimise potential disruption to critical activities.
- A6.7 Improve access to, and sharing of, information that supports improvement in service delivery.

Corporate actions for Strategic Goal 7

Continue to develop SQA as a leading public body.

A7.1 Promote and continue to evolve the corporate social responsibility strategy.

A7.2 Engage with other bodies to share best practice.

A7.3 Utilise benchmarking to drive forward organisational improvement.

A7.4 Further develop and embed a quality enhancement approach.

A7.5 Drive forward equality and diversity across all activities.

A7.6 Demonstrate leadership in understanding and managing the implications of the current challenges facing the public sector.

Corporate actions for Strategic Goal 8

Continue to develop a business model that maximises funding and efficiency to allow SQA to meet its statutory obligations in the changing economic and public sector environment.

A8.1 Continue to monitor and update SQA's Strategy for Growth in a changing environment.

A8.2 Align and implement plans across the organisation to deliver SQA's Strategy for Growth.

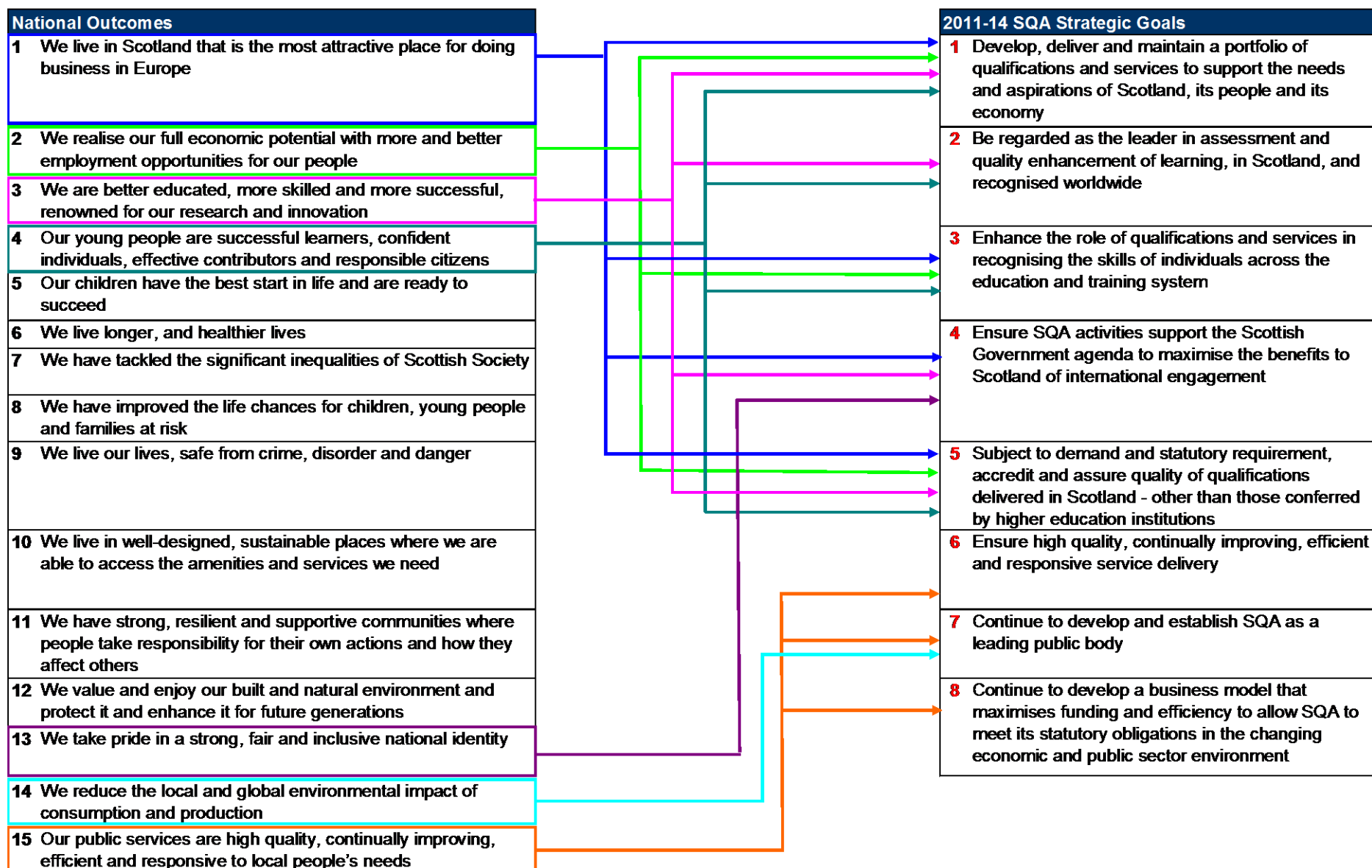
A8.3 Determine and agree a mechanism to support investment for growth.

A8.4 Ensure a sound financial base for the organisation, optimising income, making efficiency savings, reducing operating costs, and reviewing funding and pricing models.

A8.5 Explore options to extend shared services.

A8.6 Ensure that robust financial controls, processes and systems are in place to support SQA in responding to the changing economic environment

Mapped Strategic Goals and National Outcomes



Section 3: Budget

Budget 2011–12	
	£ million
Qualifications entry income	38.1
Other income	7.8
Grant funding*	21.2
Additional income required	1.3
Total income	68.4
Staff	29.3
Appointees	17.1
Other operating costs**	22.0
Total expenditure	68.4
Cash surplus/(deficit)	-